



Zion

Vistas and Visions

SEEKING PUBLIC INPUT FOR THE FUTURE OF ZION NATIONAL PARK • Zion Newsletter #5 • June 1998

Dear Friends,

We are continuing to make progress on the visitor management and resource protection plan / environmental impact statement for Zion National Park. This newsletter will provide an update on the current status of the planning process and describe the next steps.

As many of you know, last October we distributed an alternatives workbook for your review. The workbook outlined five alternative concepts for managing Zion:

- Alternative A provided additional opportunities for use and access
- Alternative B concentrated use in the park
- Alternative C reduced use while still providing for a diversity of visitor experiences
- Alternative D emphasized resource protection
- Alternative E called for minimal changes to park conditions as they were in 1997

The workbook also included a “no action” alternative that reflects how the park is currently managed and would be managed in the future if no **major** changes occurred.

We received about 270 written responses to the workbook. You will find a summary of these comments attached to this letter. After the comment period closed, we analyzed the responses and began developing the **proposed action alternative** — the National Park Service’s preferred approach for managing Zion over the next 20 years. We used an objective analysis process, called “Choosing By Advantages,” to develop this alternative. This new alternative generally combines some of the actions from alternative D in terms of protecting resources and wilderness values, with elements of alternative A regarding visitor access.

We also have narrowed the range of the remaining alternatives to be evaluated in the draft plan / environmental impact statement. Specifically, alternatives B and C have been dropped. Neither of the alternatives were highly favored by the public according to the workbook responses. We revised the alternative A and D zoning schemes to ensure that we retained the key ideas that were part of alternatives B and C.

We have made several other changes to the management zones and alternatives:

- The semiprimitive management zone was dropped because the zone did not differ significantly from the primitive management zone other than for use levels.
- The resource reserve zone was replaced by a new zone, called the research natural area zone, which would allow more access for research and educational purposes. This zone would modify or replace the three existing designated research natural areas in the park.
- Descriptions of broad management strategies are being developed to provide parkwide guidance on managing visitors, resources, and facilities.
- Finally, the key actions listed in the October 1997 workbook are being replaced with scenarios that describe actions that could occur in the park over the life of the plan, given the overall alternative concepts and zoning schemes. These scenarios will present a more tangible sense of what the alternatives could mean “on the ground” and allow a more meaningful comparison of the alternatives.

We are now preparing the draft visitor management and resource protection plan / environmental impact statement, scheduled to be published next year. This document will describe all of the management alternatives, including the proposed action. Following public distribution of the draft plan we will be holding a series of public meetings to discuss the alternatives and listen to your ideas in person. We will notify you of the meeting dates and locations.

Thank you for staying involved in planning Zion’s future! We look forward to hearing your ideas as we proceed through the planning process. If you have any questions about the planning process, please contact the park planning coordinator, Darla Sidles at (435) 772-0211.

Sincerely,

Donald A. Falvey
Superintendent

Summary of Comments Received on the October 1997 Alternatives Workbook

In general, those who commented on the alternatives workbook did not support any specific alternative as described. Instead, most responses suggested revising a specific alternative to better reflect their view of how the park should be managed. Very few chose to elaborate about why they favored one alternative over another. However, based on the letters received, people preferred an alternative because it protected the park's natural and cultural resources, and maintained or increased visitor use in the park.

Most people who commented on the alternatives focused on the actions that would be taken under the alternatives, rather than on how the park would be zoned. The following nine actions were the comments received most frequently (the actions are not listed in any order of preference):

- Prohibit aircraft overflights
- Retain/expand the Zion Lodge
- Eliminate the Zion Lodge/reduce operations
- Implement a shuttle system
- Eliminate motorized transport in the main canyon
- Increase wilderness
- Allow limited horse use in the park
- Eliminate horse use in the park
- Allow limited or strictly regulated use of Parunuweap

In the alternatives workbook, information was sought regarding rivers or river segments having regionally outstanding natural, cultural, or recreational values. Although few responded to this question, the following list identifies which rivers and/or sections were mentioned and the values identified with each river segment:

| River | Value |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Deep Creek | recreational, scenic, cultural |
| Crystal Creek | no values identified |
| La Verkin Creek | no values identified |
| East Fork of the Virgin River | geologic, cultural, natural, scientific, recreational, scenic |
| North Fork of the Virgin River | geologic, natural, cultural, scientific, recreational, scenic |
| Taylor Creek | geologic, scenic, cultural |
| Orderville Canyon | geologic |
| Left Fork of North Creek | geologic |
| Right Fork of North Creek | no values identified |
| Wildcat Canyon | geologic |
| Kolob Creek | recreational, scenic, cultural |
| Camp Creek | no values identified |

